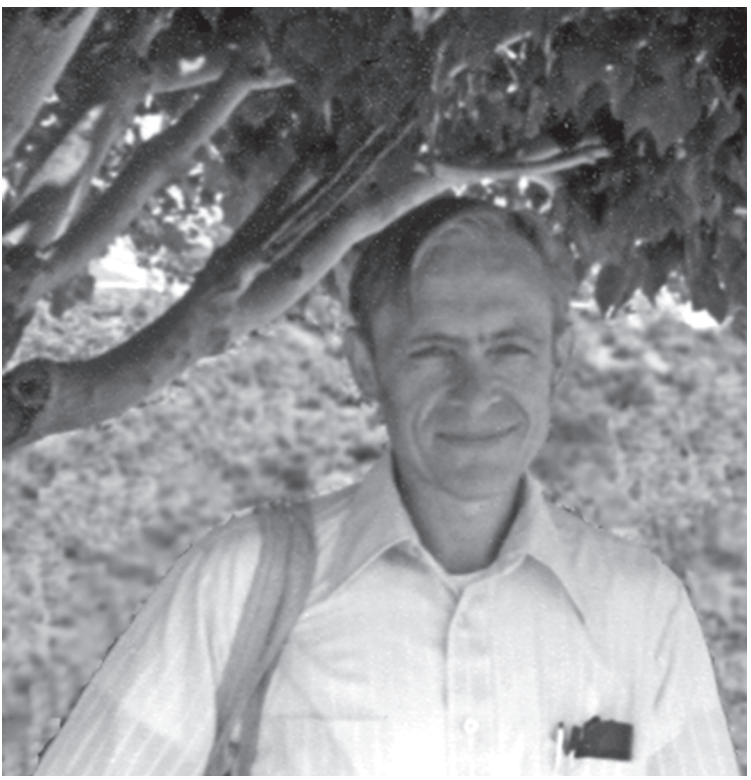

Edward Edinger in the 1980s (Photograph: Lore Zeller)

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Thomas B. Kirsch Interviews Edward Edinger, December 4, 1996

Editor's Note: Edward F. Edinger (1922–1998) is well known for his many lectures and writings on the application of Jungian psychology. He was an influential teacher and analyst, first in New York and later in Los Angeles. His books, *Ego and Archetype* (1972) and *Anatomy of the Psyche* (1985) have become classics, while his published lectures on Jung's work, such as *The Mysterium Lectures* and *The Aion Lectures* (1996), are uniquely valuable companions to reading Jung's more difficult works. His most recent book, published since his death, is *The Sacred Psyche: A Psychological Approach to the Psalms.* Tom Kirsch interviewed Dr. Edinger while preparing his book on the history of analytical psychology, published as *The Jungians* (2000).

TK: I am really curious about the history of analytical psychology, which is developing beyond Jung. Jung is by far the most important person, but there is actually a field developing at this point, and you have been a central part of that in New York, and I think in Los Angeles, too. So, I just wanted to get a little bit of history about you, is that alright?

EE: That's fine. I'll try to answer whatever questions you can come up with, and the more specific the question, the more specific the response.

TK: The first question I have been asking people is how they first heard about Jung, in what context, what was happening, or who introduced them and what happened.

EE: I encountered Jung through reading, through his books, and I also encountered fairly early Esther Harding's book, *Psychic Energy.* That was in 1949. I was through medical school and my Army service, and I was doing post-graduate work in internal

medicine, but I was not satisfied, I was quite dissatisfied, as a matter fact, and had not really found my bearings. I knew that physical medicine was not it for me: it did not carry [the] meaning dimension.

TK: Were you a resident in medicine at that time?

EE: At that particular time, in 1949, I was a research fellow at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis, and then I did go back to New Haven and had a residency in medicine there. It was in the midst of that that I woke up one morning with the realization that I had to become a Jungian analyst.

TK: Really! What was the first book of Jung that you read?

EE: I think it was *Modern Man in Search of a Soul.*

TK: That was the first thing I read, too. And then you did a psychiatry residency, didn't you?

EE: That's right. I got in touch with Esther Harding in New York and started a psychiatry residency at Rockland State Hospital in Orangeberg, New York, and personal analysis in New York. That all started in 1950–51.

TK: That's interesting to me. I had not realized, when you talk about Barnes, then Yale, you were on a kind of achievement, academically-oriented [trajectory]. I went to Yale Medical School, too. Then going to Rockland State Hospital and the Jungian thing was really a switch for you.

EE: It was a switch out of the academic locale, but I wanted a place close to New York, and I made inquiries as to where there might be people who had some interest in Jung, and there was a chap at Rockland State, and that contributed to it, too.

TK: Is that somebody I might even know?

EE: No, he never got into general visibility.

TK: Then you started your analysis, and would you say that was a positive experience for you?

EE: Are you kidding?

TK: I have to ask you that because there are so many people who talk about their analysis where it was not a positive experience.

EE: Is that so?

TK: Absolutely! That's why I put it that way to you, and I did not want to just assume it.

EE: Isn't that interesting?

TK: Without mentioning names, there are a lot of people who are/were very disillusioned by their analyses.

EE: I am sorry to hear that.

TK: Well, it has been very disturbing to me to hear it, too.

EE: I am afraid it is a symptom of the times, too, because things have changed from my days.

TK: Right. For you it was an absolutely transforming experience, I knew that intuitively, even though I have never talked to you about it, but I just sensed that. Can I ask how long you were in analysis?

EE: It trailed off gradually; it was about six or seven years.

TK: Did you have any supervisory work at that time, too?

EE: Yes, but at that time there was no organized training program in New York, and training was done on an *ad hoc* basis. There were occasional lectures and seminars that would be put on by the Professional Society.

TK: I thought there was just the Club at that time.

EE: There was a Professional Society ever since about the mid-forties, I'd say. It was called the New York Association of Analytical Psychology, but there was no Institute, no Foundation. The Club and the Professional Society would do things jointly, and the Club would bring over people from Zurich so that there would be seminars. The main training was done on an *ad hoc* basis and emphasis was on the individual analysis and supervised analysis.

TK: Who was your supervisor?

EE: I did that with Eleanor Bertine. Are you familiar with her?

TK: I saw her once as a possible analyst, but then she became ill, and I could not see her. It was at Yale in 1958. As a matter of fact, I saw Esther Harding once, too. I don't know what would have happened if I had done that. I saw you once, too.

EE: Yes, I remember that. You finally worked with Eugene Henley, didn't you?

TK: I did, and that was very wonderful for me.

EE: I would think so; he was a pretty sound fellow.

TK: I liked him a lot.... Later I came to San Francisco, and I have been seeing Joe Henderson on and off ever since. I have the same feeling about my analysis as you do about your experience with Esther Harding.

EE: That's what happens when you get hooked up with quality.

TK: I really feel very fortunate. When or how was it decided that you became a Jungian analyst?

EE: Well, that was my intention right from the beginning, and I was told to get started and to see how far I could go. Get into some analysis, get psychiatric training, and see what unfolds. It unfolded, and I was accepted.

TK: This is what I am trying to get clear on, the New York Association for Analytical Psychology then accepted you as a member.

EE: That's right, I'd say the decision really was up to my analyst and my supervisor. That's how it worked in those days.

TK: In other words, Esther Harding and Eleanor Bertine said, "You are ready."

EE: They presented my name to the Professional Association, and I was accepted.

TK: You did not have to do anything special, like write a paper or present a case?

EE: No, I did not.

TK: What year was that?

EE: Probably 1957. Maybe it was 1956. I remember giving my maiden paper to the Analytical Psychology Club in 1956.

TK: What was that on?

EE: Let me see if I can find it in the files: "Reflections Concerning the Transference Phenomenon."

TK: Very interesting.

EE: It is a perfectly acceptable paper, and I am not ashamed of it.

TK: There is nothing that you have written which is not absolutely quality. I am sure that one would be, too; I have not seen it. Now you are an analyst, and there is the professional group, and what happened for you then? Did you become active in the teaching? When did teaching start there? [Was it the] kind of seminar format that we know today?

EE: As I said, there were occasional seminars given by different

people, but the formal program did not start up until the early sixties, the same time that the Foundation was formed. What is currently called the Institute … was originally called the Training Center [and] … thought of as really an arm or a portion of the Jung Foundation. Since then they have become more separated, but originally they were quite closely connected.

TK: That is also very interesting to me because that meant that the Foundation was to be the major organization.

EE: That was the original idea, that it would have different arms, it would promote public programs in one aspect, but that it would also have a professional training arm.

TK: Were you actively involved in the founding of that professional arm of the Foundation?

EE: Yes. I was very active in that whole thing, and I was one of the original members who got the original incorporation for the Foundation. Originally, the Institute did not have a separate incorporation, and now it does. Originally, the incorporation was just the Foundation. I am one of the original three or four individuals who set up that corporation.

TK: Who were the other three or four?

EE: You can check it out for sure by inquiring, but I remember Anneliese Aumüller was one; I am sure Esther Harding was one, Christopher Whitmont might have been one, and myself—these are the only ones I remember.

TK: So that is in the early sixties. Then were you also active in the Foundation, in the public part of it, too?

EE: Yes, very much so. I gave public seminars quite frequently.

TK: What subjects were you speaking on then?

EE: In the early sixties I gave a seminar, or a series of lectures and discussions over a period of four to six weeks, on "The

Relation Between the Ego and the Self," which later became the first part of *Ego and Archetype*. I gave a long seminar on "Alchemy," and it was the first phase of what became *Anatomy of the Psyche*. I gave a long seminar on "Greek Mythology." Due to the efforts of Deborah Wesley it is now edited in the book, *The Eternal Drama*. I gave a seminar on "Gnosticism."

TK: Really! I would say, Ed, that you have been the strongest student of Jung in the sense that you do not have the ambivalence towards the religious aspect that, I think, somewhere Jung was always struggling with.

EE: Well, Jung was not ambivalent.

TK: No, he was not ambivalent, but he would not take the religious step, he always wanted to be ... (maybe this is getting off the track), but there was a kind of scientific attitude that he always held to. I am sure you do, too.

EE: I don't think you are adequately understanding him. I don't think there was any ambivalence, and I don't think there was any ambiguity. The ambiguity is only apparent to people who cannot fully understand Jung's empirical position. We have lots of so-called Jungians who are indeed ambivalent about the religious dimension of the psyche, no doubt about that, but I do not believe that is true of Jung. What you are referring to, what seems like the two strands, the scientific strand and the religious strand, are not antithetical or problematical once one has reached the depth of understanding of the psyche that Jung is working from.

TK: I guess there is a way—I don't know how to put it—when I read you it comes out clearer than it does in Jung.

EE: Do you know why, I think, that is? I have been told that a number of times, and I know what you are referring to. I think there are several reasons for that. One reason is a typological difference. My good perceptive function is sensation, and Jung's was intuition. That temperamental difference leads me to be more concrete and clearer and more specific. But that is also because with my lesser intuition I am not as keenly aware of all the

secondary and tertiary interconnections that the images and ideas refer to, and that means although I am clearer, I do not have Jung's depth.

TK: Yes, but it is experientially very different to read you. It is somewhat easier: there is a clarity that I can grasp.

EE: On the one hand, that is an advantage, but it is also a disadvantage in that some of the resonating depths are left out of the account.

TK: I want to correct myself. I did not mean to say that Jung was ambivalent about religion, but there is a way in which the fluidity, the intuitive fluidity, of his writing is very different from reading you. I feel a directness, and maybe I need to go back and read Jung again.

EE: Jung is dealing with more data, more psychological data, than I am. He plumbs depths that I have not reached and that nobody else has reached, either. In trying to be true to his full experience, he necessarily then cannot be more clear than all his data warrant.

TK: I appreciate your putting it out so clearly for me because that helps me to formulate it. You see, one of the questions that I am asking myself here is that today there are so many Jungians who are related to psychoanalysis, and it's always very questionable what is going on when they pair up that way, and I am curious what it was like for you in New York with this strong introverted bias and your experience of the unconscious, what your relationship to psychoanalysis was, if there was one, or to other non-Jungian psychotherapies.

EE: I thought I had an understanding of what Freudian psychoanalysis was, what Adlerian analysis was, and in my days Sullivan was also pretty well known, and I was familiar with all those approaches. They all have their elements of truth and validity. They are not erroneous really: it's just when a partial truth is assumed to be and is used in practical application as though it is the whole, then it becomes erroneous in my understanding.

But as far as what we euphemistically call the Jungian community, it was a much more agreeable place to me in those days than it is now.

TK: I can imagine.

EE: The people I associated with, I had personal respect for all of them; they had a good level of analysis, and they had a reasonably good understanding of Jung, and they were devoted to the Jungian view, and that state of affairs has progressively diluted as the so-called community has enlarged.

TK: Do you have a sense that the Jungian point of view is just going to become so diluted that it will become part of a larger depth psychology?

EE: Yes, I think that has already happened, but I am not too unhappy about that phenomenon. I have given a lot of thought to the question of "Why there are so many different schools of psychotherapy?"

TK: I would love to hear what you have to say about that.

EE: We have got several schools of psychotherapy within our so-called Jungian organization even. I am sure you are well aware of that.

TK: I am acutely aware of that.

EE: More aware of it than I am given the political responsibilities you have carried.

TK: Which I am very glad to be out of now!

EE: Anyway, it is a fact that there are a number of different schools of psychotherapy, and it is a fact that expresses something about the nature and variety of the psyche. That tells me that different people, for different reasons, find certain formulations as to the nature of the psyche more compatible and comfortable and more serviceable to their own development than others. I

think there are probably different reasons for that. The first one, of course, that springs to mind, and that Jung has already pointed out in the difference between Freud and Adler, is the difference in the attitude types, and function types too most likely, or in part.... I really do see the mass of humanity as psychologically spread out along the course of history. What I mean by that is that there are now not a few cave dwellers still amongst us.

TK: You think there are?

EE: A few. That psychological level. There are now not a few ancient Greeks: I am thinking about the ones we hear about in the *Iliad*, for instance. As I have alluded to in various places, I see the psychology of inner city gangs as very similar to the psychology of the Greeks and Trojans during their war, the way it is described in the *Iliad*. And so on through history. We certainly have a lot of people from the Middle Ages, and a great number of people in eighteenth century Enlightenment. In fact, not very many people passed that level. To get up into the twentieth century to what Jung talks about in his work as the really modern man, that person is quite rare. Those will be the only ones, I think, that really have the capacity to grasp what Jung is talking about. So, we have these different schools of psychotherapy, and everybody has to find what fits for himself, and it's futile to have argumentation between the different ones because they are experiencing different realities.

TK: I wonder when you were in New York—I am assuming in Los Angeles you have been much more introverted, seeing patients, writing, and you have not been involved in the training per se ...

EE: That's right, I give some courses, but I don't participate in the organizational functioning.

TK: And in New York you were central ...

EE: I paid my dues then, and I feel entitled now not to do that anymore, and it does not fit my current reality at all. I am not

on any committees, and I don't want to attend meetings and things like that at all.

TK: I am very sympathetic to that point of view. Did you get into discussions or did you have this formulated about the different schools of psychology when you were in New York, or would you get involved in discussions among different psychotherapy schools in New York?

EE: Very early on, when I was quite young, I attended a few panels put on, not by our organization, but [by] some of the other organizations in New York, where representatives of different schools came together and would have panel discussions before an audience. I did that a few times. It was a very unsatisfactory experience, and I learned very quickly that this was not a profitable way to spend my time.

TK: Were you active in the New York professional organization until you left, which was in 1976 or 1977?

EE: I left in 1979, and I was the Chairman of the Institute for ten years up till I left.

TK: So they had to replace you. I know that whenever I go back to New York and see people like Beverley Zabriskie, or others, you are still very much thought of there.

EE: I have been back a few times and have given talks. I went back last year, for instance, and also in 1984, to give them a chance to be reminded of me.

TK: That's good. When you were there, were you Chairman of the Training Board when the professional group separated from the Foundation?

EE: I was, but I don't have a clear memory of exactly when that was.

TK: Was that a friendly separation, or a difficult separation?

EE: As far as my experience of it, it was friendly, but I cannot speak for everybody because people have different reactions to those things.

TK: But from your point of view it was....

EE: The separation amounted to the training center getting a separate incorporation, and I don't recall in detail all the surrounding dealings about it, but the general sense was that I think we were a little concerned about how well the Foundation was going to be maintained, and that we [had] better look after ourselves, and during the mid-seventies the Foundation was spending more than it was taking in, and I was quite dissatisfied with the direction it was taking. I was serving on the Foundation Board at one time, I remember, that was the time when Skip Wyles—I do not know whether you remember him—was the Foundation Director, but I was so dissatisfied with the way the majority was taking the Foundation, I resigned from that Board.

TK: I came on the Board in about 1979, and you were already gone at that time. Philip Zabriskie was the head of it and Charlie Taylor—they were the two, and Joshua Sherman was the Executive Director. I was on the Board for a long time and then pulled away, too. What was the relationship of the Analytical Psychology Club to all this? The New York Analytical Psychology Club was an important organ.

EE: That's very true. It was the original organ, and it is the repository of the Kristine Mann Library, which is probably their finest asset. It was a separate entity, it shared the building as soon as we got the building, and it has maintained its separateness, and —to tell you the truth—along the way I have had more faith in the continuity of the Analytical Psychology Club than I have had in the Foundation.

TK: I can understand that too. There is a soul in these Clubs. They are outdated in some external way but internally they have a life of their own.

EE: Exactly, it has got some soul. They are founded on and

rooted in authentic experiences of the psyche that people come together to share.

TK: As I have gone into this, I am so much more aware of how important the Clubs were, and I am really going to emphasize this. I talked to C.A. Meier before he died, and he said, in the 1930s and 1940s it was in the Club where all the intellectuals congregated, where the life of the psyche and of Jung's psychology were.

EE: On this subject, you might be interested to pick up a tape of a lecture I gave in New York last year, in 1995, entitled "The Question of a Jungian Community," in which I elaborate some of my thoughts about these different entities we have, and what their significance is.... I gave two talks in September 1995 and the other one was on "The Vocation of Depth Psychotherapy."... I gave that talk down here, and it's going to be published in *Psychological Perspectives*. The other one was a little more informal and is available on tape.

TK: ...We have candidates who have never heard of the Analytical Psychology Clubs.

EE: I know, because for some reason the young analysts did not connect with the Clubs, and I think the young people also are afraid of mixing the professional and the social. They are trying to be very rationally separate, and the result has been a kind of disconnection.

TK: I'll try to talk about some of the positive aspects of what those experiences were like for people, and what went on in the Clubs because they were the meeting points. How would you compare your experience practicing in Los Angeles and what it was like for you in New York? Or are they such different phases in your life that you cannot make any kind of comparison?

EE: What aspects do you want me to compare?

TK: What is it like having a practice, what is your life style as a Jungian in Los Angeles? It seems to me so different from New

York. You say you paid your dues in New York. You were much more involved in the outer world there....

EE: There are all sorts of differences. To start with, I lived in Rockland County and commuted to Manhattan, and here I do not have to commute anymore. That's a big difference to start with.

TK: It gave you at least two hours a day.

EE: About an hour each way. I guess the clientele is subtly or not so subtly different, and my mode of function has relaxed more and more, which is partly due to age, and partly due to location and cultural atmosphere, but the big change, of course, was that—although for a few years I served occasionally on an Admissions Committee or something like that—I did very little of that sort of thing and soon bowed out of that completely. That's the big change.

TK: I noticed that you are not a member of the IAAP.

EE: Yes, I am.

TK: You are? Good.

EE: What made you think that?

TK: I could not find you in the book.

EE: Sure, I am. I am a member of both the New York and Southern California Associations, and my voting membership is in Southern California.

TK: Here it is. Good.

EE: It probably has a symbolic significance.

TK: I am interested in that.

EE: To tell you the truth, I am not particularly proud of being a member right now.

TK: I don't know whether that was my intuition about it.

EE: I attended the first three international congresses: in 1958 in Zurich....

TK: Did you meet Jung?

EE: Oh, yes, a couple of times. The second one was in 1962, again in Zurich, and the third one in 1965, in Montreux, and that was my last one. By that time it had gotten so collective and unwieldy that it made me a little sick, and I have never attended a congress since then. It has gotten bigger and bigger, and less and less to my taste ever since.

TK: It may seem strange, but I have a certain sympathy with that. Although I have made a certain niche for myself with certain friends, the last congress was very difficult for me. I am very happy to be out of the organizational structure. I have also paid my dues! But has there also been something that happened, what the IAAP represents today compared to five or ten years ago, which upsets you or is there something that you are strongly against?

EE: No, it's the total drift of things. It is very disappointing to me to see what Jung fundamentally represents getting lost even while his name is still functioning. It is quite remarkable to me that there are really quite widespread undercurrents of hostility to Jung, in the organization. Some of it is right on the surface, and there is a lot of it just below the surface. I have reflected a lot on what that can mean, and I'd be interested to hear what you think it means. What I think it means is that what Jung has achieved requires more of people than they have to give to it, and it generates a sense of inferiority and inadequacy, which then has to be defended against.

TK: That's very interesting. I am a feeling type, and I put it on another thing, that there was a kind of over-idealization of Jung among certain people in the first generation, that Jung could do no wrong or had no shadow or anything like that. And in a sort of compensatory way people are going through a period of Jung-bashing at this point, to kind of compensate.

EE: You are offering a collective explanation while I am offering an individual explanation.

TK: You are right.

EE: I would like to carry this issue a little further with you because, as you are well aware, people consider that I am one of the prime over-idealizers of Jung.

TK: I have heard that said.

EE: I am sure you have.

TK: I grew up with two parents who were very strongly identified with Jung.

EE: That may make it a little difficult for you to be objective. I appreciate that thought very much.

TK: I don't say that I am objective about this, believe me. Jung has always been part of my life.

EE: What separates me from practically all the other so-called Jungians is that I have a perception of Jung's magnitude that other people do not share. That's not something one can argue about or prove. It's just an individual perception, and either it is way off base or it is approximately correct, and only history will determine that. But I do have it, it is my deepest conviction and so I must live out of it, and I judge people on the basis of whether they have it or not too.

TK: It is so hard, Jung was a great, great thinker, and he is central in my life too, and I don't know how to answer that.

EE: There is nothing to answer, and I just wanted to take the opportunity to spell it out because ordinarily these things go on behind one's back, and you don't usually have a chance to have a direct interchange on these matters.

TK: I am very touched by that because in some way, in my own

limited way, I feel the same way about Jung, and what Jungian psychology has done in my life is so central. I get identified with that, too, and I hear this said about me too, maybe in a family way or....

EE: Cheap analytic remarks!

TK: We live our lives. I really respect that you are living out your conviction, your deepest inner position.

EE: It is a continual surprise to me that people who are confronted with everything that Jung has left us, his works, his letters, his seminars, and if one had made a serious study of those things, it is obvious that this man has plumbed depths that nobody has ever touched before, and it amazes me that this is not generally recognized. I continue to be amazed that it is not recognized.

TK: My sense was that people like Esther Harding, Joe Henderson, my parents, that generation felt something very deeply about Jung and recognized it.

EE: Well, they had had the experience to some extent, they had the depth experience, and the depth experience is now very rare.

TK: It is. You look at the candidates we have now....

EE: And the requirements for graduation are now so watered down, the psychological requirements, and that has been progressing for twenty or thirty years now, getting worse and worse, and lower and lower requirements.

TK: And people have to read less and less of Jung, and they read instead other authors. The London group, for instance, SAP: Jung probably is not even the major author they have to read; it might be Winnicott or Fordham. It's very different.

EE: It's a very different school of psychotherapy.

TK: This may be a good point to stop. I have been very touched, especially the last few minutes, and I appreciate talking with you.

EE: I have enjoyed it, Tom.

TK: Would you like to see this?

EE: If you are going to work up a transcription of it, I would like to see it.

TK: I'll send it on to you. Thank you.